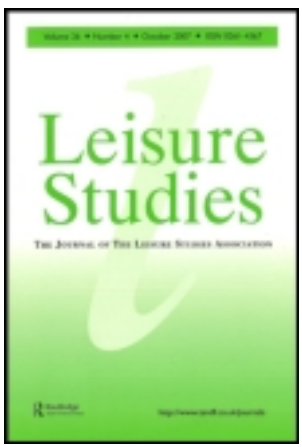

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'I never promised you a rose garden': gender, leisure and home-making

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This paper explores the importance of contemporary gardens as leisure sites and argues that leisure in general, and the garden in particular, play an important role in the process of homemaking. We also consider how the contemporary garden reflects wider social relations by examining how gender relations imbue gardens and gardening. The gendered meanings of gardens and the garden as a place where gender power relations are played out, are highly significant in the social construction of 'home'. Using primary research data, the paper looks at what it is about the domestic garden that is important to both men and women, and how it contributes to homemaking. The findings show that there are conflicting uses and meanings of gardens which help to reveal the changing nature of gender relations in late modernity.

Introduction

Today gardening has become trendy and 'relentlessly' fashionable and, even though gardening is often portrayed as an innocent and common everyday activity, it is now receiving considerable attention. Indeed, it has been described as 'groovy' by *Vogue*, and 'the new sex' by *Tatler*. Such media hype should alert social scientists that something more significant is going on; we want to argue that gardens are of importance in identifying power relations in the home, homemaking, and cultural change. Gardening is a major leisure activity through which a number of social and cultural themes can be explored. As a part of everyday life, gardens, the meanings of gardens, and ways of gardening, convey ideas about the role of leisure in home-making within which the family, and in particular, gender relations are highly significant. Indeed there is an ambiguity at the heart of the search for the 'ideal home' in late modernity (Putnam, 1993) and we want to argue that to understand the garden as a leisure space it is necessary to examine how it is also a place within which gender relations may be reinforced or re-negotiated.

The contemporary garden is usually the domestic garden which is an area of enclosed ground cultivated or not, within the boundaries of the owned or rented dwelling, where plants are grown and other materials arranged spatially. The garden then is a place and space, and is related to the act of cultivation, that is, gardening. Whereas the garden can be a site of leisure production and consumption, gardening is a form of action, literally 'mixing

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with the earth'. Not everyone has a garden, and clearly some people do not like gardening. Some people have gardens and let others do the work. Some are happy either to let one household member do all the work, or do the minimum amount and use the garden as a place to sit, engage in family-orientated activities, relax, or display certain items. Or quite often the garden is an outside space for do-it-yourself activities and car repairs. In many cases it is left alone to its own natural processes and seen as an eyesore or a domestic chore. On the other hand we came across people desperate to cultivate, but had little or no space to do so. Even so, recent data suggests that there is a growing popular interest in both the garden as a site of consumption, and gardening as an activity. Focusing on the home garden can reveal a number of changes in contemporary society, and the meaning and use of gardens should therefore be a part of a wider social and geographical understanding of leisure.

The garden, like home and family, is often seen as a haven from the public world of work and politics. And yet the meanings and practices surrounding gardens convey tensions and conflicts present in wider society (see Francis and Hestor, 1990; Hoyles, 1991; Bhatti, 1999). Despite gardening being a major leisure activity there is very little analysis of how the contemporary home garden and gardening relate to wider social, economic and cultural processes. In a seminal essay Sime points out that,

> The 'home garden' as a significant part of the home and a physical locale for home-making and 'dwelling' has been neglected. (1993, p. 240)

Even though there is some recognition in other perspectives, such as psychology, that gardening performs an important role in people's lives (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989), the contemporary garden has largely been ignored in social science generally and leisure studies in particular. Thus, the literature on leisure in the home, and attachment to house and home has grown separately from the scant literature on meanings of contemporary gardens. There is, however, a considerable literature on famous gardens, celebrated gardeners, and more than enough coffee-table books on 'how to garden', but a social history of domestic gardening in Britain is still in its infancy (see Constantine, 1981; Hoyles, 1991; Morris, 1994; Ravetz and Turkington, 1995; Bhatti, 1999). One theme of this paper then is to attempt to combine insights from several perspectives, particularly sociology and geography, and to point to some close interactions (as well as tensions and conflicts) between the home, family, gender, leisure and the garden. Any consideration of the wider significance of the contemporary garden though must recognize that it cannot be neatly separated from the social construction of the home in which gender relations are deeply embedded. Including an analysis of the garden and gardening in the process of 'home-making' creates a slightly more ambiguous and uncertain understanding of the role of the garden as a leisure site.

In this paper then we look at how garden meanings and gardening practices can help us explore a number of broader themes. The paper is in three sections: the first section briefly reviews the literature on 'home' and suggests that while a home-based gendered leisure has been studied extensively (Deem,

1986), the garden, as a key element of leisure and home-making has been neglected. Thus, our focus is mainly on changing gender relations, though we recognize that other dimensions such as class and ethnicity also play an important part. The second section briefly looks at the broad characteristics of contemporary gardens and gardening in the UK. The third section examines how gendered meanings of the garden are constructed, and gardening practices understood. Francis and Hestor (1990) suggest that the garden (like home) can usefully be analysed through four key dimensions: as idea, place, action, and experience (see also Bhatti, 1999). The home garden according to Francis and Hestor (1990) can be seen simultaneously as: an idea that shapes our understandings of nature within key social relations; a place often seen as somewhere to escape to, but one where there can be considerable conflict (or reconciliation) over how it is used; an action, that is the physical activity of gardening and a process of 'mixing with the earth'; and finally as an experience, a mode of being involving gardening and the garden, that reconnects us to the earth, thereby helping to create a more intimate relationship with nature. In this paper we seek to extend this analysis by focusing on place as a key theme, an understanding of which requires a consideration of action, experience and idea. In this way we integrate these four themes and imbue their discussion with a greater emphasis on the importance of social relations. The 'idea' of the garden, or more precisely the social meanings of the garden, varies according to social relations and we explore in particular the issue of gender and gender relations. A number of historical studies have argued that the garden is also a gendered place where tensions and conflicts (and reconciliations) between men and women are played out, often as part of maintaining existing social orders (Morris, 1996, Rose *et al.*, 1997). Thus, we view gender as continually evolving sensed difference which interacts with people and objects (Massey, 1994). This approach clearly takes us past simply viewing the garden as a leisure site and instead stresses how wider social processes shape leisure in the home. Our investigation of the garden in relation to these themes is illustrated with secondary data and from our own research. In conclusion, we argue that the home garden is one key arena of everyday life that requires further research. For us the garden provides a lens for understanding the creation of micro social worlds that are an important part of an individual response to tensions and conflicts in wider society. Thus, the garden provides useful insights into not only the changing nature of leisure but also the role of leisure in the continual evolution of social relations.

Leisure, home and garden

The idea of home has been subject to considerable debate and controversy (see Saunders and Williams, 1988; Allen and Crow, 1989; Saunders, 1990; Wardhaugh, 1999). It is not the purpose of this paper to evaluate critically this extensive literature; rather we want to point out that introducing the gendered meanings of gardens and the gender relations of gardening adds a new dimension to this debate. The meaning of home is often seen as a

reflection of key processes in contemporary society such as increasing home ownership (Saunders, 1990); growing demand for privacy (Madigan and Munro, 1993); increased privatism (Marshall *et al*., 1988); affluence (Crow, 1989), fears over environmental threat (Hinchcliffe, 1997) and changing family patterns (Devine, 1989). The overall conclusion of the social science literature seems to be that broader societal processes are leading to home-centred lives for both men and women (see Allan and Crow, 1989). In geography the home has traditionally been seen as central to the creation of 'sense of place' (Tuan, 1981). Gregson and Lowe (1995) argue that the home has generally been neglected by geographical considerations of social reproduction and Domosh (1998, p. 279) suggests the home can be analysed as 'a landscape form, an economic entity and a domestic space'. Recently, there have been a number of attempts to consider the position of the home in late modernity and its role in individual strategies to construct order and certainty (see Chapman and Hockey, 1999). As Putnam suggests,

> further work is needed on the contemporary home as a cultural site . . . 'the home' as an ideological category may come to have a less definite and fully specified signification. (1993, p. 152)

In the literature on the home it is often argued that post-war shifts in leisure, technology, family, and work patterns have resulted in the growth of home-based leisure activities (Saunders, 1990; Tomlinson, 1990; Allan and Crow, 1991). Indeed Putnam (1993) claims that,

> Overall the home is project to be realized as well as a centre for leisure and recuperation. (p.153)

Even though there is now considerable evidence to suggest that leisure is increasingly individualized and home-based, especially with the growth of owner occupation and new technologies, how this is to be interpreted is a matter of some debate. Allan and Crow (1991) in an examination of home, leisure and family argue that privatization is too narrow a view of home-life due to the sociability and leisure activities involved in home-making. Nevertheless, they conclude that in the pursuit of satisfaction, personal control and creativity are key elements in current definitions of the home.

One key debate is the extent to which the experience and meanings of home are the same for women and men (Hunt, 1989; Saunders, 1989; Madigan and Munro, 1993; Darke, 1996). Feminists have challenged masculinist views of the home as being a space primarily for reproduction and have argued for new forms of domestic design that reflect female time–space orderings (Ahrentzen, 1997; Domosh, 1998). Similarly, in relation to home-based leisure it is argued that whilst for men the home is a place for recuperation, leisure and relaxation, for women it is often a place of paid and unpaid work, which to a large extent defines (amongst other things) their leisure. The idea that gender relations play an important or even defining part in leisure, and home-based leisure in particular, has been convincingly argued (see Deem, 1986; Wimbush and Talbot, 1988; Green *et al*., 1990). Thus,

Green concludes that '. . . in western societies at least, women's leisure is more likely than men's to be based in and around the home' (1996, p. 143). This is still the case for certain groups of women in part time work even though women's employment has generally increased in recent years (Kay, 1996). Moreover, combining work and domestic labour may leave even less time to engage in outside leisure activities.

'At-home' leisure, therefore, will dynamically interact with the sense of difference that is gender relations, and we found a constant re-negotiation of roles emerging in relation to gardening. Thus Deem (1986) argues when at home, women's experience of leisure is often hard to separate from other key non-leisure activities:

> . . . under certain conditions. So, gardening is enjoyable when it involves creating a rock-garden, or tending well-loved plants on a sunny day with a whole afternoon available, but not when it means taming an overgrown lawn on an overcast evening as well as cooking the tea, washing three machine loads of washing, cleaning the kitchen and bathing children. (1986, p. 34)

This quote from Deem is a typical example of the scattered references to the garden and gardening found in the leisure literature. Nevertheless, the quote has resonances to leisure research and the need to recognize the degree to which leisure is imbued with work (Rojek, 1995), a point we return to in our empirical analysis. In many discussions of changing leisure patterns, however, the garden has remained hidden from view, and yet it figures quite highly when people begin to talk about their homes. In leisure studies generally the focus on the garden is either as a 'hobby' or more often in terms how outside space is used for leisure and other household activities (see Williams, 1995). The cognitive meanings of gardens or the insights they provide into contemporary social and cultural change are rarely addressed. This is somewhat odd given the importance attached to such issues in the study of gardens historically (see Morris, 1996 on gender; and Daniels, 1999 in general). In section 3 we present data suggesting that meanings of gardens are highly gendered, and that the garden is a place within which gender relations are often played out or re-negotiated.

We view the home as 'being-in-the-world', a lived experience which is a form of emplacement or physical rootedness, from which the individual engages the world (Sime, 1993). By 'home-making' we mean daily routines and activities rooted in time and space that contribute towards the fulfilment of a 'life project' creating the domestic sphere (Putnam, 1993). This is an active and dynamic process whereby meanings of gardens can have just as much significance as other factors. Equally, it recognizes that the garden like the home has multiple social meanings and possibilities (Massey, 1994). Some key elements of home-making have been identified as: gender relations, the family/kinship, privacy, house space/design, and tenure (Putnam, 1993; Miller, 1999); again the garden is often almost completely neglected. Indeed looking at the garden throws new light on these factors; for example, some of our respondents sought privacy in the garden, and yet it is a semi-public space. Or children became an important factor in the uses made of the garden

or what is planted. We want to point out that much of the leisure debate has neglected the importance of gardens as idea/meaning and as a place embedded in daily routinized activities that can be used to explore the interactions between home, leisure and gender relations.

Gardens and gardening today

One key social change in the late twentieth century in the UK that is often overlooked by historians and social scientists is the almost universal provision of gardens during the post-war period making gardening a mass urban leisure activity (Constantine, 1981). Britain has a relatively high level of houses with private gardens compared with the rest of Europe; nearly 84% of UK households have access to a garden and in 1996 there were 20.2 million private gardens in the UK (MINTEL, 1997). In terms of land area, private gardens make up around 3% of England and Wales, approximately 1 million acres (size of Somerset), which is considerably more than the 85 000 acres protected as nature reserve. Clearly in a small proportion of British households the garden is a largely ignored space. But the data on social and leisure trends report a steady rise in adults participating on a monthly basis in gardening activities from 42% in 1977 to 48% in 1996 (GHS, 1997). The same data, however, suggests that a period of growth in participation in the 1980s has been followed by little change in the 1990s. More recent data suggests that just over two-thirds (67%) of the adult population claim to garden as a hobby, even if they do not participate on a monthly basis (MINTEL, 1997).

A number of trends suggest how gardens may develop in the future. Firstly, as plot sizes have contracted the lawn and flowers are the main features of gardens, with less space allocated to growing vegetables and fruit (MINTEL, 1997). Also, detailed studies of activities in gardens have linked intensification in the workplace and the rise of dual-worker households to an increasing role for gardens as 'outdoor rooms', where individuals seek to relax, children play and the washing is hung out to dry (Williams, 1997). Similarly, MINTEL (1997) suggest that gardening increasingly involves the low maintenance, or 'minimum', garden. Thus, hard-standing areas for cars, patios and easy care lawns are increasingly incorporated into gardens, with back-gardens typically an outdoor 'living room'. Today gardens are for many people becoming things to be looked at, used and enjoyed, rather than to be actually worked in (MINTEL, 1997). In gardens, therefore, the emphasis is increasingly on what is often termed casual as opposed to serious leisure (Rojek, 1995), although the latter is still important for many people.

Nevertheless, positive attitudes to gardening are spread across the adult population, though there are clear variations in gardening activity in terms of gender, age, family cycle, and social class (see MINTEL, 1999). Levels of monthly participation are unsurprisingly highest amongst age groups between 30 and 70 and in higher income social groups. For example, only 21% of 20–24 year olds gardened on a monthly basis compared to 61% of 60–69

year olds. The proportion for social group E with lowest incomes was 41% compared to 59% in group A (GHS, 1997). The same government data for 1996 suggests a gender difference, with only 45% of women regularly gardening compared to 52% of men. By contrast, MINTEL's (1997) consumer survey data indicates no marked differences between the proportion (67%) of men and women claiming gardening to be a regular or irregular hobby.

More detailed consumer survey data suggests women tend to be more likely to be involved with certain forms of gardening. For example, in the most recent MINTEL (1999) survey, 953 adults were asked to respond to certain statements with 37% of men claiming they 'try to keep the garden tidy but don't enjoy it' compared to 29% of women. Whereas 26% of women and 15% of men agreed with 'I love my garden and try to spend as much time as possible in it'. As is normal in consumer surveys of this type, MINTEL (1999) seek to divide respondents into typologies with five gardening groups being identified; enthusiastic, wishful, dutiful, disinterested and idea gatherers. 67% of women were categorized as idea gatherers compared to 51% of men and women also recorded higher proportions than men in the enthusiastic and wishful categories. Women also showed greater interest in organic gardening (MINTEL, 1999).

In an earlier consumer survey Mintel (1997) grouped consumers into four rather different categories. They suggested that 23% of those with access to gardens were 'horticultural hobbyists' (i.e. serious gardeners, those who work hard in the garden), 35% were classed as 'leisure gardeners' (those who enjoy the garden but lack time/skills to garden), another 35% were 'investor gardeners' in that they see the garden mainly as a way of adding value to an owner-occupied house and only 7% are non-gardeners who may garden occasionally but see it as a waste of time. This grouping produced more notable gender differences with nearly two-thirds of serious gardeners being women, whilst men were concentrated in the leisure and investor gardener categories. This is limited evidence of distinct gender roles in gardens with women concerned more with cultivation and men with maintenance.

Whilst consumer surveys and government data on gardening may reveal some social differences in gardening tasks and activities they can only hint at possible broad explanations and do not reveal the significance of the garden or gardening to the individuals. Clearly, this secondary data highlight the importance of changing tenure patterns and household structures. Elsewhere we discuss the effects on practices in the garden of the media and the garden industry, but these influences are to some degree mediated by broader social relations (see Bhatti and Church, 2000). The next section, however, seeks to position the garden and gardening within the context of wider social and economic change by examining in more detail the interrelationships between gender, gardens and gardening. Clearly, gardens and gardening will reflect recent changes in gender relations but the garden is also a space and place where gender relations are actively worked out and negotiated which may have more general implications for understanding the role of the home and leisure in gender structures.

Gender and the garden

The qualitative data in this section comes from two sources. In 1998 the Mass Observation Archive at the University of Sussex issued a directive entitled *The Garden and Gardening* which received 244 responses from 181 women and 63 men. The directive asked respondents to write about key personal themes that related to their gardens including the personal significance of the garden and gender differences in terms of tasks and how these may be changing. Data was also collected on the role of the garden in home-making. Replies ranged from a single page to some over 30 pages with photographs and drawings of gardens. Dickens' (1996) has used Mass Observation data successfully but warns that it is not a representative sample and tends to contain more older people, women, and respondents living in the South. Nevertheless, it is a rich source of qualitative material and used with caution can be used to explore themes not easily examined with quantitative data.

Data is also drawn from our own survey of 150 households interviewed at garden centres: 77 respondents from this survey filled in additional in-depth questionnaires. This survey was designed to obtain views on garden centres and information on respondent's gardens using a mix of closed and open-ended questions. The secondary questionnaire obtained more details on respondent's feelings and perceptions of their garden, their home and the environment. The qualifications and occupations of the 77 suggested the majority were drawn from upper and middle income groups but they provided further qualitative data to enhance the more quantitative data from the first questionnaire. In this paper we mainly utilize data from Mass Observation Archive and use the results from our garden centre survey to supplement the analysis. Quoted sources below containing a number indicate they are drawn from Mass Observation, other quotes are from the garden centre survey. The evidence presented suggests that including an understanding of the garden in an analysis of the home starts to identify some of the complex tensions and ambiguities in the role of gendered leisure in home-making.

A number of commentators have portrayed the domestic garden as a masculinist place, and women often enter it not own their own terms. Leading female garden designers, such as Gertrude Jeykll, have had a considerable influence on garden form (Massingham, 1982), but Riley (1990, p. 67) highlights the sexism that is ever-present in the domestic garden, '. . . a place where women do their work and know their place'. Tasks such as mowing the lawn, digging, planting, pruning, weeding, and growing flowers were distributed accordingly with certain jobs giving men control of the garden. For much of the twentieth century the garden, particularly in working-class households, has been portrayed as the man's domain and more importantly a primarily masculine source of relaxation and pleasure. Thus Hunt points out that 'Several men in my enquiry worked regularly in the garden. They did so by choice' (Hunt, 1989, p. 67).

She points out that by preferring to work in the garden, men were not only able to separate themselves from their daily employment; but also from domestic duties as well. Moreover, domestic space in the house is never her

personal territory, so there is no where to sit and relax; the garden could offer a refuge, but 'Husbands may have a shed or garage to work or relax in . . . or the garden may be seen as their domain' (Hunt, 1989, p. 71). Olechnowicz (1997) in his study of a new housing estate (Becontree Estate in Dagenham) also emphasizes the way in which men took control of the garden: 'Men tended their garden. The encouragement of gardening was the most important contribution of the inter-war council estate to modifying working class leisure' (Olechnowicz, 1997, p. 208). Indeed, Olechnowicz notes that Mass Observation from this period suggested that gardening was compensation for the absence of pubs. Not only was gardening 'man's work', but certain parts of the garden were male preserves, which children and wives entered rarely. In working-class areas, such as east London, social reform groups stressed the supposed value of such divides: 'The garden makes family life possible; while the father gardens, the children play, the mother does the housework' (quoted in Olechnowicz, 1997, p. 210). Gardening was also a discursive activity which men engaged in 'over the garden fence', thereby further reinforcing the exclusion of women from the garden. Local institutional structures further strengthened gender roles; for example, municipal authorities further encouraged gardening by giving grants to gardening clubs, prizes at shows, and a championship cup for the best-kept garden on the estate; all of these were largely controlled by men. Indeed just as the Victorians had emphasized the value of gardening in improving the morals of the labouring classes, reformers during the inter-war period sought to reinforce gender roles (see Constantine, 1981; Bhatti, 1999).

Discussions emphasizing masculine control, whilst implicitly acknowledging gender relations, may fail to reveal the role of women in constructing the garden as a place. Some feminist geographers have argued for viewing the garden as a feminine place. In a discussion of ways of looking at everyday landscapes Rose *et al.* (1997, p. 180) argue that:

> Landscapes apparently considered too everyday and banal have been ignored. But many of those other landscapes have also historically been spaces through which women have expressed a relationship to landscape . . . One such everyday landscape is that of the garden. Gardens other than the grand landscape park, have been gendered as feminine. They are thus an environment in which women can construct their own landscape.

The evidence to support this claim is largely drawn from studies of the garden in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similarly, Davidoff and Hall (1983, p. 335) note that in the mid-nineteenth century 'Women who in the past had been responsible for functional vegetables and herbs, were now becoming associated primarily with flowers, their brilliant colouring, fragility, fragrance and their existence for decorative purposes only'. Thus, in this period garden representations and practices are seen as usually contributing to existing social order. However, certain theorists, like Gertrude Jekyll, who promoted feminine designs and practices, meant that 'the English garden is not quite as tranquilly calm as its usual representations suggested' (Rose *et al.*, p. 181). This last quote suggests that an understanding of the inter-

actions between gardens, gardening and gender needs a consideration of the contemporary garden not simply as a masculine or feminine place. Instead, it is necessary, as with studies of the home as a domestic sphere (Domosh, 1998) and consumption in the home (Miller, 1988; Bell and Valentine, 1997), to view domestic gardens not simply as sites where men and women adopt different roles, but as places shaped by the continual restructuring of gender relations.

To some degree, however, our empirical results emphasise how some male respondents wished to control the garden as a place. Indeed, female respondents often addressed the issue of gender differences directly, claiming that their partners were seeking to impose order on the garden.

> My husband does 99% of gardening. I love beautiful gardens but I am a hopeless gardener. My husband's view is that 'if you can't eat it don't grow it' but I love having flowers to cut and bring into the house and to have colour in the garden. My husband wanted roses in the front garden but wanted to fertilize the ground. Someone suggested he put potatoes into the ground so we were the first house in the road which had potatoes in its front garden!!! (NO: B1386, female school administrator, age 58)

> My husband mows the grass, sees to his compost thing, and puts in bulbs and most of the plants, as he is an engineer it all has to be done methodically and correctly, I obviously do it wrong. I would like a work-free garden, and I would hate to be cooped up with no garden. (NO: C2570, female, carer, age 76)

A number of male respondents were willing to confirm that they wished to maintain their personal ordering on the garden:

> My wife always does the mowing and in her own words leaves the growing of things to me. (NO: B1509, male retired chartered surveyor, age 69)

> I've assiduously removed weeds, nothing worse in any garden. I like tidiness generally. My wife and I pull out weeds in public gardens if we have a few spare moments as they particularly offend us.

> I have a conflict with my wife as I don't like to see any bare earth, I like plants to grow where they like to grow . . . whereas my wife has to remove plants to find space for her new ones. I garden to keep it under control, and to provide texture and colour. (NO: A883, male clerk, age 63)

Wilson (1992) suggests that the practices and imagery associated with post-war homes in the US represented the garden as another space in the home where gender divisions were confirmed. Many of our respondents stressed the degree to which gender differences pervaded their own gardens, but the last two quotes above suggest the garden should not simply be interpreted as a masculine space that serves to maintain patriarchy. The final extract describing somewhat unexpected public actions may be indicative of a joint approach. The last quote also uses the word conflict but also acknowledges a process of negotiation. A number of respondents also indicated the need to see the garden as a location where gender divisions can be not only reinforced but also to some degree re-negotiated. Indeed, as the Mass Observation

respondents below indicate the garden for women who share a home with men may contain certain gender-related possibilities not found elsewhere in the home.

> I have to tell you about my mother's love of gardening . . . when our small house was built my mother found time and energy spare from helping my father with all the manual work as well as raising her family to create a lovely garden. (NO: M1996, female nurse, aged 55)

Clearly, this respondent's mother's control over the garden may simply reflect a lack of interest or time by her partner, but for other female respondents the garden was clearly a negotiated space.

> Then at the turn of the decade I had a change of heart. I decided I wanted to do something about the garden, but I didn't want to be continually compromizing.
>
> I said to my husband, I'll do the work, you don't have to do anything; but that means I get to decide everything. It'll be my garden. And he agreed. I set to.
>
> I looked at the rectangle of lawn and decided I wanted less formality, fewer corners, not so much straight edge. I looked at all the ground cover plants that were useless against the couch grass, and I pulled them up. I took a spade and fork and I dug and turned and riddled it . . . I ended up with enough stones for my friends to take away in carloads to use as hardcore for their new driveway. And still there were more stones . . .
>
> My husband is more interested in the garden these days, and more willing to do the work, which is good thing because I can do much less . . . now the garden isn't mine but ours in a way it hasn't been before and it doesn't have the air of compromize that so often accompanies the interior decoration of the house. (NO: M1201, female home carer, age 35)

In the case of this woman it is clear that the negotiation over the garden as a place was intertwined with gender and other processes that shaped the time–space arrangements of the respondent. Indeed, a number of female respondents did not discuss the garden in clear gender terms, instead focusing on the other work-related dimensions that structure female time–space strategies. The difficulty of separating leisure and work conceptually has received much discussion (Rojek, 1995) and a number of women clearly constructed the garden as a place in relation to the nature of paid and unpaid work. These respondents were stressing the action associated with gardening more than the meaning. Often the garden and gardening were imbued with a sense of pleasure due to their distinctiveness from paid or domestic work. Our respondents often described gardening as enjoyable, but hard work with many benefits:

> Although I hate the work in the garden, it does add an extra dimension to one's living space – one doesn't feel 'imprisoned'. (Female, teacher, age 35–40)
>
> Hard work at times but enjoy seeing the 'fruits' of my labours when it looks good. (Female, teacher, age 25–30)
>
> I enjoy the constant change – seasonal new plants, a place to be busy but with potentially beautiful effects unlike work or housework. (Female, social worker, age 40–45)

> I always enjoy 'looking at' the garden in any 5/10 minutes e.g., while a meal is cooking. There is always something of interest to spot – much better than staring at four walls. (Female, civil servant, age 30–35)

> I'd like it to be a lot bigger, south facing, secluded from neighbours and 100% free from cat shit. I'd also like my neighbours to do something about their bind weed and leaf mould because they affect my garden. Aesthetically, my garden gives me a lot of pleasure but as I work from home, I'm sorely tempted to drop my work and work in the garden in good weather. (Female, journalist, age 35–40)

The last extract is from a woman who lived alone and is thus able to develop a garden without masculine influence within the household. Indeed, the quote also illustrates the point made by many respondents that escape and privacy are a desired element of the garden but as in other leisure sites (Rojek, 1994) they are often compromised in the garden, in this case by neighbours or other family members. Nevertheless, for some female respondents the meanings attached to gardens were of considerable personal significance and they were aware of how their identities imbued their gardens as places.

> I am very emotionally attached to it. It is my own creation from scratch and is my baby. It is small and a bit scruffy and rather wild (a bit like me!) but I love it. (Female, geriatric carer, age 25–30)

Most importantly, this quote and those relating to work in the garden highlight that these women, like many male respondents, view the garden as a distinct domestic space, subject to social relations and time–space frameworks. In this context the garden cannot simply be interpreted as a leisure site in terms of the activities undertaken. Leisure in the garden and the process of gardening cannot simply be understood by the leisure and non-leisure activities taking place but must be interpreted as part of a wider process of social change.

Conclusion

We are aware that we have only captured a small part of the leisure world of gardens and gardening and their relation to home-making. Social relations of class, gender, generation and race have major influences on the nature of home-making. The extent to which many of the notions of the 'ideal' home (house with garden) are actualized depends to a large extent on structural social and economic forces. In the social science literature on the home, however, the garden is notable for its absence. For example, in the discussion of what makes a house a home, some contributions emphasize 'family', identity through art and creative design of home interiors, which is often seen as a creative joint project (between men and women) of house improvement (see Putnam, 1993). However the space outside the house that is the garden provides other possibilities distinct from the rest of the house for reinforcement or re-negotiation of gender relations. As our research shows, the garden can be more artful and creative, especially for women, than the interior and may have a significant impact on the search for identity.

The garden then is, like home, a gendered space and is often filled with shared creative pleasures, but also escape from domestic drudgery or from other members of the family. But crucially men and women relate to the garden in significantly different ways, often related to availability of 'spare' time and the pressure from other activities.

Finally, our research clearly shows that gardens have multiple meanings that subsume leisure activities. The quantitative data illustrates how gardening is now a major leisure activity. The qualitative data shows there are many ideas and uses of the garden that extend well beyond its role as a setting for leisure. Gardens can been seen as a private retreat, a haven from the public world; a setting for creativity; a social place for sharing; a connection to personal history; a reflection of one's identity; and a status symbol. Our data has clearly illustrated that the garden often reveals hidden (or not so hidden) social relations and can be seen as a negotiated realm that highlights deeper gender relations. We have not explored all the issues here but gardens and gardening have been neglected areas in the social science of leisure. We feel that gendered meanings and power relations in the garden are a useful point from which to start but there is clearly further research to be done.

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